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AFRICA

Biodiversity Preservation and Indigenous Peoples in Africa

(some on
Hadza)

Over the past decade a dramatic upsurge has taken place in activities designed to conserve biodiversity in Africa. Calls have been heard from local people for the implementation of projects that enhance their livelihoods without reducing their access to land and natural resources necessary for their survival. Striking a balance between conservation and development is the key to ensuring the long-term survival of both people and wild species. The problem has been that conservation efforts have sometimes had negative effects on local peoples, including violations of basic human rights.

In some parts of Africa, biodiversity is on the decline as some species have gone extinct and habitats have been altered by a combination of human and environmental factors. A major worry of biologists is that the ability of ecosystems to carry out vital functions such as maintenance of soil fertility, water retention, and cycling of nutrients will be reduced by the loss of biodiversity. There are several reasons for this situation. First, the rapidly expanding populations of many African countries and the di-

ing multinational corporations and international development organisations, have increased their efforts to exploit Africa's biological and cultural resources. And third, numerous scientific discoveries, some of them drawn from indigenous knowledge, have resulted in an expansion in the uses to which resources are put.

In response to rising concerns about biodiversity losses, international agencies, African governments, non-government organisations (NGOs), and local communities have attempted to re-think some of the approaches in order to come up with strategies that are sustainable over the long term. Attempts are being made to frame policies and put into place a variety of projects aimed at integrating conservation and development. The basic assumption behind these projects is that people will not attempt to conserve resources unless they can see the economic and social utility of doing so. When people are able to derive both direct and indirect benefits from the consumptive and non-consumptive use of resources, they are more likely to engage efforts to enhance the well-being of those resources.

African biodiversity programs range from habitat and ecosystem protection with the declaration and gazettement of national parks and game reserves (spatial conservation) to the passage of endangered species protection legislation and enforcement of conservation laws. African countries and various agencies are also involved in actions aimed at promoting agroforestry and wildlife breeding, including crocodile and ostrich farming. These programs have had implications for the resource rights of African populations, many of them indigenous peoples, a sizable number of whom live in the vicinity of national parks, game reserves, and other protected areas.

In the past, a major problem with biodiversity conservation programs in Africa was that they tended to dispossess people or to prevent them from pursuing resource procurement activities. As one Ju/'hoansi woman in the Nyae Nyae region of Bushmanland, Namibia, put it, "Government first took away our right to hunt

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versification of African economies are having major impacts on the environment. Second, outside agencies, includ-



and then tried to remove us from our traditional territories." The passing of legislation to control hunting and the setting aside of parks and reserves generally served to exacerbate problems of poverty and resource stress among local communities in Africa (Anderson and Grove 1987).

Some people in Africa feel threatened by what they perceive to be coercive conservation. Local people had been subjected to periodic search and seizure operations since the establishment of colonial institutions in Africa. This is particularly true of indigenous peoples, many of them foragers or small-scale farmers who hunt and gather to supplement their subsistence and incomes.

Africa has the largest number of indigenous peoples of any continent on the planet, some 350,000,000 depending on who one defines as indigenous. Most African countries do not recognize specific groups within their territories as indigenous, maintaining instead that virtually all the residents of the country, with the exception of people who came in as colonizers or as refugees, are indigenous. Some of these peoples, such as the Masai and the Turkana, are or were pastoralists. Others, such as the 100,000 Bushmen (San) in southern Africa, have a long history of hunting and gathering. Still others, such as the Bakonjo or the Batoro of Uganda, are agropastoralists.

In the 1970s and 1980s, as the concern over the loss of elephants, rhinoceros, and other large mammal species increased, there were greater efforts by African governments to put pressure to people who they defined as poachers. There is evidence to indicate that individual Bushmen, Pygmies, Hadza, Masai, Somalis, and other groups were mistreated or, in some cases, killed by government officials in the course of their official duties. In some cases, people were arrested by police or personnel of Wildlife and National Parks departments. There were also instances in which people were shot and killed, ostensibly for poaching. Information obtained in the field suggests that at least some of those shot were simply gathering wild plants, obtaining water, or visiting friends.

Exact numbers of people killed by government officials in the pursuit of biodiversity preservation are difficult to come by. Some officials have suggested

off the record that there may have been as many as 96 people shot in 1992 in one country in southern Africa in a single year; others familiar with the area argue that the numbers are much lower than that, around a dozen. Interviews of local people in villages along the borders of several African countries indicate that a fairly sizable number of people were stopped and questioned and at least some of these people were arrested, beaten, and killed at the hands of officials.

The anti-poaching operations have served, it has been argued, to reduce the losses of such endangered or threatened species as rhinoceros and elephant. There is a major question, however, as to whether or not the mistreatment and killing of people is really the most effective way to promote conservation. Some individuals in a number of parts of Africa have suggested that the actions of government and military agencies are genocidal in intent. Others have said that these actions have been undertaken in order to get them off the land so that it can be used for other purposes.

The question that a number of indigenous groups are asking today is whether or not it is appropriate for government agencies that are supposed to be doing conservation to be so heavily involved in promoting activities that are having such negative effects on their lives. As one Tyua woman from northeastern Botswana put it, "Just because these people say that they are helping preserve the environment does not mean that they should be able to violate our human rights."

Members of local communities, non-government organisation, and African researchers and development personnel have called for alternative strategies which will help rather than hurt Africa's people. Some NGOs, with the support of government environmental agencies, are engaged in promoting projects which increase local incomes and raise standards of living while also carrying out biodiversity conservation.

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International (CI), Wildlife Conservation International (WCI), the African Wildlife Leadership Federation (AWLF), and other environmental NGOs are involved in projects that combine conservation and development.

These projects, which are termed integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs) or community-based natural resource management projects (CBNRMps), are found in a wide variety of ecological zones, from tropical forests to savannas and from Afri-montane habitats to coastal marine regions (Wells and Brandon 1992; Brown and Wyckoff-Baird 1992).

Some of the integrated conservation and development projects are located on the peripheries of protected areas in what are sometimes referred to as buffer zones, while others are in rural areas under customary systems of land tenure such as those in the communal areas of Zambia and Botswana. Several projects are being implemented in specially designated reserve areas that allow for multiple use (e.g. hunting, collecting of medicinal plants and firewood, small-scale cultivation of domestic crops, and tourism). These projects generally are aimed at enhancing living standards of local peoples and conservation of natural resources (Brown and Wyckoff-Baird 1992).

The NGOs involved in community-based natural resource management and development activities operate on a number of explicit assumptions, which are as follows:

- 1) that providing people with access to the economic benefits from natural resources will result in their becoming increasingly willing to conserve those resources.
- 2) that making people better off as a result of development programs will result in their refraining from illegal exploitation of protected resources.
- 3) that providing people with viable alternatives or substitutes will take the pressure off protected area resources.
- 4) that involving the community in environmentally oriented rural development programs will result in people becoming advocates for and guardians of their area's natural resources.
- 5) that allowing people to participate in decision-making concerning the management and use of their resources will result in their being more willing to manage those resources sustainably.
- 6) that providing people with tenure or stewardship rights over resources will increase the chances of their exercising greater care in maintaining them.

- 7) that greater awareness of the importance of environmental conservation will result in people being more willing to engage in it.
- 8) that investments in intensive productive systems (such as organic agriculture and soil conservation) will encourage people to reduce their dependence on extensive production systems, thus lowering pressure on resources and slowing or stopping advancement of the agricultural frontier.
- 9) that involving people equitably as active partners in all phases of project implementation, from conceptualization through design and evaluation, will increase the chances for project success.
- 10) that by increasing the options for local people to manage their resources for the benefit of current and future generations, better conservation will result.

The country where this kind of approach has been developed to the greatest extent is the Republic of Zimbabwe in southern Africa. There are at least two and possibly more populations in Zimbabwe who can be defined as former foragers and who were affected by conservation programs. One of these groups, the Tembomvura of the Kannyemba and Chapoto Wards in the Guruve District in northeastern Zimbabwe, was moved out of a reserve. Some Tembomvura were also arrested for illegal hunting and for entering protected areas for purposes of collecting firewood and other resources. During the Zimbabwean War of Independence (1965-1980), they were not allowed to have weapons, carry out hunting activities, or even protect their crops from marauding wildlife. In the past, many of the people in Zimbabwe saw wildlife more as a problem than a potential source of income, subsistence, and employment. Elephants, buffalo, and other animals destroyed their fields and sometimes killed people, and predators such as lions and leopards reduced their livestock numbers. The safari industry catered to non-local hunters and tourists, and people in the communal areas saw few, if any, benefits from the presence of safari companies. Police and Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWLM) personnel were viewed as enforcers of laws which sometimes

meant that local people were jailed for illegal hunting or obtaining resources inside the Parks and Wildlife Estate.

In the late 1980s, efforts began to be made to promote community-based resource management and rural social and economic development in the area where the Tembomvura resided. Under the Parks and Wildlife Act of 1975, the Zimbabwe government began to devolve authority over benefits from wildlife to communities and wildlife committees under the Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). This program was aimed at increasing conservation while at the same time ensuring greater economic benefits to local people.

One of the problems with CAMPFIRE has been that many of the decisions about resources management came from outside the producer community. This can be seen, for example, in the case of the Guruve District, where virtually all of the members of the local wildlife committee are from groups other than the Tembomvura. Tembomvura households did not receive household-level economic benefits from the various wildlife utilization activities. They also had little, if any, say in the decisions about how the funds were going to be used. The Guruve District Council has been reluctant to give decision-making power to lower-level institutions such as ward wildlife committees. Efforts are being made to convince the district councils in Zimbabwe to devolve decision-making to ward and village level institutions and to provide greater benefits to individual households, but whether this works or not remains to be seen.

In the case of the Dzange-Sangha forest special reserve in the Central African Republic (CAR), Baka Pygmy communities are being assisted in economic development and conservation promotion by an interdisciplinary team composed of ecologists, social scientists, and health and rural development workers. This project, sponsored in part by the World Wildlife Fund-US and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), supports self-help activities and assists in the establishment of both formal and informal village associations. Some of the Baka in the forest reserve are working as tourist guides

while others are selling goods that they obtain from the forest on the commercial market. Health workers are involved in doing immunizations and first aid and practising preventative medicine. Conservation efforts are promoted through limiting the numbers of trees extracted in timbering activities, setting upper limits in the numbers of tourists visiting the area, and enforcing game laws. One problem has been trying to prevent incursions of outside groups into the area.

The Baka Pygmies in Cameroon have been affected by a number of development programs that included setting up permanent village settlements and associated agricultural projects through the Ministry of Social Affairs. Impacts of the programs included expanding the degree of dependence on domestic foods, something which had implications for the nutritional well-being of local people. Conservation efforts in and around Korup National Park in Cameroon included resettlement of people from the park into the buffer zone on the peripheries. The primary strategy to encourage resettlement included alternative cropping techniques and income generating activities to replace foraging and resource collection for fuel, material, and medicinal needs. Pygmies in the region have raised the issue of monetary compensation for their losses. The 1,000 Hadza (Hadzabe) of the region around Lake Eyasi in northern Tanzania are foragers who have had relatively extensive interactions with their neighbours, trading with them and working for them as hunters and guides. The Hadza were affected by the imposition of wildlife laws, the movement of pastoralists and farmers into their area, and the expanding tourism and contract farming industries.

The mid-late 19th century saw the ivory trade expand and then decline as a result of hunting pressure on elephants. Hadza were employed as trackers, guides, butchers, and carriers. The imposition of game laws by German and later the British colonial authorities saw Hadza being arrested for hunting illegally, a process which removed them from the labour force, causing hardship among their families.

Since the 1950s, the pace of change among Hadza has increased. The area has been under pressure due to colonization by non-Hadza populations. Some of the bush has been cleared and overgrazing is a seri-

ous problem, reducing the amounts of wild foods available to foragers. Deforestation has increased as a consequence of charcoal production and trade. Tourism has expanded in the area, with tour buses coming close to Hadza country in their quest to see both wildlife and local people.

The establishment of settlements, especially after 1964-65, was an important process in Hadza country. One reason the settlements were set up was to encourage hunter-gatherers to take up other ways of making a living. Some of the development strategies that were attempted in these areas included having Hadza take part in game cropping, tsetse fly clearance, and the establishment of safari camps for tourists. They also played a role in the disappearance of woody species in the vicinity of the settlements, turning trees and shrubs into charcoal for sale to towns and tourists camps. The areas around the settlements are described by some Hadza as "scenes of devastation."

Villagization in Tanzania had already posed a threat to customary land tenure and the future of Tanzania's rural populations. Such a situation was seen in the case of the Barabaig, an agropastoral people whose grazing rights were usurped

by a wheat farm established by the Tanzanian government and a Canadian donor, CIDA. Little attention was paid to existing land tenure system and the cultural systems in which they operated during the project planning process. The spill-over effects of the wheat scheme included movement of Barabaig into Hadza country, a process which has increased pressure on local resources and has exacerbated social tensions.

Indigenous peoples in Africa have been quick to respond to some of these pressures. In Tanzania, some educated Hadza who have returned to their areas have undertaken community development work and have done grassroots political organizing and promotion of Hadza land rights. Pan-Pygmy (Batwa) organizations decried the genocide which occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Southern Africa has seen the rise of a number of indigenous non-government groups that are seeking social, economic, and cultural rights for Bushmen and other indigenous peoples. Indigenous groups in Kenya, Tanzania, and other countries have called for greater efforts to be made to promote basic rights to food, water, and health (Veber et al. 1993).

For community-based natural resource management projects to be successful, they must incorporate careful planning and design that is participatory in nature. These kinds of projects are definitely labour-intensive, and they require extensive interaction between staff and beneficiaries. In some of the evaluations of ICDPs, it was found that some members of the target communities, notably women, children, the elderly, and indigenous minorities, were left out of the project planning and implementation process. Clearly, greater attention needs to be paid to class, gender and ethnicity issues in future conservation and development efforts.

The degree to which conservation and development projects are beneficial is dependent in part on the extent to which local people can take part in project activities. Many of the environmental projects that were initiated did little in terms of providing employment and income generating opportunities. They did even less in the area of providing access to management-level positions in the projects and the NGOs involved in implementing them.

Effective conservation and development activities in Africa can only come about when coercion gives way to cooperation, and when local people are given support, information, and technical assistance. Indigenous peoples, for their part, are more than willing to cooperate with those organizations that place human rights on an equal footing with species preservation.

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Note: The data in this table were obtained from Anderson and Grove (1987); Wells and Brandon (1992); Brown and Wyckoff-Baird (1992); the U.S. Agency for International Development, the government of Zimbabwe, the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF-International). □

Project	Country	General Comments
Korup National Park	Cameroon	a multipurpose conservation and development project involving a park and a buffer zone, with resettlement linked to alternative means of generating income, agricultural and agroindustry extension, and human resource development.
Dzanga-Sangha Forest Reserve	Central African Republic	multipurpose conservation and development project with health, income generation, and training components
Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA)	Tanzania	use of region's grazing resources by Masai permitted, some benefits from tourism returned to district councils
Gurue District CAMPFIRE	Zimbabwe	community-based resource management projects that include wildlife-based tourism, safari hunting, utilization by local people, culling, management training and extension assistance along with local institutional strengthening activities.